

President Salome Zourabichvili Addresses Georgia's Crisis and U.S. Policy at Atlantic Council Event

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

On January 21, Georgian President Salome Zourabichvili participated in an Atlantic Council event, where she discussed the current situation in Georgia, Russia's influence in the country, and her expectations for U.S. policy under the new Trump administration.

Zourabichvili explained that when she met several members of the new U.S. cabinet, her "essential message" to them was that Georgia needs U.S. attention "now more than ever." She described the ongoing crisis in Georgia as "existential."

The president emphasized that U.S. policy toward Georgia has "always been bipartisan," suggesting that she does not expect any significant changes under the Trump administration. She also pointed out that the current Georgian government no longer has functioning institutions. Zourabichvili added, "I don't see any American government that can accept as a friend and partner a country like that that is playing friends with sometimes the Chinese, sometimes Iran, sometimes some of the terrorist groups."

Zourabichvili praised Trump's vision for a "strong America" and said that Georgia needs more action than words. "I think that the America that he [Donald Trump] is describing, and the foreign policy of America that he is describing as of a strong America... America that is effective and active in action – that is the America that Georgia certainly needs," she said.



Zourabichvili also criticized Georgian Dream (GD) for seeking "alternatives" to its traditional American and European partners, turning to Russia, China, and Iran instead. "That's a big mistake," she stated.

On Russia's role, Zourabichvili said, "Russia is

trying to recuperate its positions in the region." She suggested that as Georgia's European integration had accelerated, Moscow had increased pressure on the Georgian Dream party, and its rhetoric toward Western partners had become "more aggressive" following Georgia's EU

candidate status.

Regarding the ongoing protests, Zourabichvili explained that the GD's decision to leave the EU path was a "miscalculation." She mentioned that the GD had thought they could provoke a new movement with small protests after the elections

but failed to suppress it as planned. "I think the regime's dissolution has started," she said, noting that the protests show no signs of stopping. She warned that the country could suffer from the economic impact of sanctions and isolation as the regime's downfall unfolds.

European Parliament Debates Georgia's Political Crisis

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

During the January 22 European Parliament debate, MEPs discussed Georgia's worsening political climate, focusing on the October 26 elections, repression of demonstrators, and actions by the Georgian Dream (GD) government. The majority of speakers criticized the government's approach.

European Commissioner for Home Affairs and Migration, Magnus Brunner, opened the debate by condemning violence against protesters, politicians, and journalists, as well as threats against President Salome Zourabichvili. He stated that GD's actions were incompatible with EU candidate status. Brunner urged the government to de-escalate tensions, release detained protesters, investigate abuses by law enforce-

ment, and engage in constructive dialogue with civil society and political groups. He also emphasized the EU's solidarity with the Georgian people and announced the reallocation of Euro8.5 million to support civil society, alongside reduced EU engagement with the GD government and halted direct financial assistance.

In the subsequent 45-minute debate, MEPs expressed a range of views. Lithuanian MEP Rasa Jukneviene (EPP) criticized the GD government, highlighted threats to democracy, and called for sanctions against Bidzina Ivanishvili and others responsible. German MEP Tobias Cremer (S&D) condemned repression, urged new elections, and noted the resilience of the Georgian people despite government actions.

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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.8612; Euro - 2.9782; GBP - 3.5239; 100 Russian Ruble - 2.9018; Swiss Franc - 3.1553

European Parliament Debates Georgia's Political Crisis

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French MEP Thierry Mariani and Slovak MEP Branislav Ondruš defended the GD government, opposing what they described as European political in-

terference. Mariani argued against EU influence over Georgian decisions, while Ondruš pointed to GD's efforts to counter Russian occupation as evidence of its pro-European stance.

Other MEPs, including Polish

MEP Malgorzata Gosiewska (ECR) and French MEP Nathalie Loiseau (Renew Europe), urged stronger EU action, sanctions on GD officials, and support for civil society and free media. Several speakers also

called for investigations into alleged election irregularities and the release of political prisoners, including former President Mikheil Saakashvili.

The debate concluded with Magnus Brunner reaffirming the

EU's commitment to supporting Georgia's civil society and democratic aspirations. He announced that the European Council would discuss Georgia at its January 27 session, with further actions to be decided in February.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Giorgi Gakharia Responds to Attack in Batumi, Blames Bidzina Ivanishvili

22 იანვარი, 2025

მინდა, კიდევ ერთხელ, მადლობა გადაგიხადო მხარდაჭერისთვის. დღეიდან მუშაობის ჩვეულ რიტმს ვუბრუნდები.

რაც შეეხება თავდასხმას, ეს იყო წინასწარ ორგანიზებული, ჩასაფრებით მოწყობილი, პოლიტიკური მუხრისძიება. თავდასხმის დამკვეთი - ბიძინა ივანიშვილი.

ივანიშვილი დიდი ხანია მემუქრება მე და ჩემს ოჯახს, სხვადასხვა ფორმით და გზებით, მათ შორის, საჯაროდაც.

მე არ მაინტერესებს ამ თავდასხმის შემსრულებლები. მე სამე მაცვს ჩემზე თავდასხმის და მოქალაქეებზე ძალადობის დამკვეთთან.

რაც შეეხება გამომძიებას, მათ ვაძლევთ შესაძლებლობას, შეინარჩუნონ სახე და არ გახდნენ ძალადობრივი დანაშაულებების თანამონაწილე.

გიორგი გახარია

Giorgi Gakharia, leader of the Gakharia – for Georgia party, has released a statement addressing the recent attack on him in Batumi. Gakharia linked the assault to Bidzina Ivanishvili, accusing him of orchestrating the attack as part of a prolonged campaign of threats against him and his family.

"I want to thank you once again for

your support. Starting today, I am returning to my usual rhythm of work," Gakharia said. "As for the attack, it was a pre-planned, ambushed, political revenge. The person who ordered the attack is Bidzina Ivanishvili."

Gakharia went on to explain that Ivanishvili had been threatening him and his family for a long time, in different ways, including publicly. He dismissed concern about the attackers themselves, focusing instead on Ivanishvili, who he claims is behind the violence. "I am dealing with a person who ordered attacks on me and violence against citizens," Gakharia stated.

Regarding the investigation into the attack, Gakharia expressed doubt, suggesting that authorities might attempt to avoid accountability. "We give them the opportunity to save face and not become complicit in violent crimes," he concluded.

Two Georgian Citizens Released After Illegal Detention by Russian Occupation Forces

On January 22, the Georgian State Security Service (SSSG) confirmed the release of two Georgian citizens, Aleksi Mamulia and Ivane Japiashvili, who had been illegally detained by Russian occupation forces. The men are now in Tbilisi-

controlled territory.

Mamulia and Japiashvili were detained near the village of Kvemo Nikozi, in Gori municipality, late last year. The occupying forces accused them of assisting military deserter Vladimir Mamardashvili, a fighter from the war in Ukraine, in crossing into Georgia's Tbilisi-controlled areas.



The SSSG reported that their release was facilitated through the European Union Monitoring Mission's operational

hotline mechanism, along with other diplomatic efforts by the Georgian government. The statement also emphasized that the responsibility for such actions in the occupied regions lies with the Russian occupying power.

"The central government, together with international partners, continues to work actively for the release of all citi-

zens of Georgia illegally detained in the occupied territories," the SSSG concluded.

UNBOXING THE EU: a practical guide to help journalists report about the EU

EU NEIGHBOURS east, in collaboration with the European External Action Service (EEAS), the European Council, and the European Parliament, has developed a practical guide aimed to help journalists from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine better understand the structure and functions of EU institutions.

The guide also provides insights into the EU's enlargement policy and decision-making processes. Additionally, it in-

cludes valuable audiovisual resources, press contacts, advice on

accreditation and press requests. This comprehensive guide con-

solidates essential information on EU reporting rules and media opportunities. Moreover, with editions in Armenian, Azerbaijani, Georgian, Ukrainian, Romanian, and Russian, it is the first regional guide of its kind that can serve as a reference for translation of the names of institutions, high-level officials' positions, legislative acts, and EU policies.

Primarily targeted at young journalists and news reporters, the guide is also a valuable resource for

media relations specialists preparing journalists for high-level interviews, study visits, media trips, and briefings.

The content is based on a media survey, conducted by EU NEIGHBOURS east among its media partners, to indicate key topics for clarification and emphasis in an explainer.

This guide aims to strengthen the connection between EU institutions and media outlets in the Eastern Partner region and to equip media professionals with the tools to better inform their audiences about EU policies and cooperation, with a particular focus on the EU enlargement process for candidate countries.

(euneighbourseast.eu)



Weather

Thursday, January 23

Day Overcast
High: 6°C

Night Overcast
Low: 1°C

Friday, January 24

Day Overcast
High: 10°C

Night Overcast
Low: 1°C

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